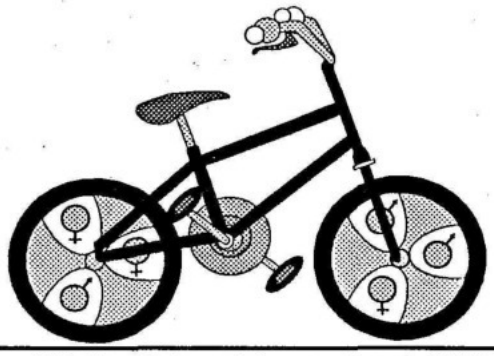


# OBN NEWS

## *September 1990*

OBN News, 519 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2C9 Bus: (416)-649-1356 / Fax: (416)-649-1314

*The Ontario Bisexual Network (OBN) is a group formed to enable contacts among bisexual people in Ontario, and to help them undertake activities of interest. At present, these activities include: a mailing list, a newsletter, support group meetings, social activities, a political action group, education of others, information sharing, and safe sexuality information. The network's only mandate is to bring people together. — OBN Meeting, August 2, 1990.*

### Meeting Times

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month, from 6 to 8 p.m., and on the third Thursday of every month from 8 to 10 p.m., at the 519 Community Center. (519 Church Street, just north of Wellesley.) You may have your name and address added to our mailing list at any meeting, or by writing to OBN, c/o 519 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2C9.

### Meeting Topics

In addition to conducting network business and hearing about the activities of the subgroups made possible by the OBN, each meeting at the 519 Community Centre usually includes some time sharing thoughts around a particular topic relevant to us as bisexual people. Planned topics for future meetings include "Breakups" (September 6th, 6-8 pm, led by Bruce Small) and "Humour and Bisexuality" (September 20th, 8-10 pm, led by Andrew Harris).

Anyone interested in taking their turn at facilitating either the business part or the topic and discussion part of the meeting is welcome to speak up at any time.

### Who to Contact

The following is a list of OBN members who have volunteered their time to talk with you about questions you may have or if you just need someone for emotional support:

Bill Jeffery (416) 922-4262
Bruce Small (416) 649-1356
Carol Broderick (416) 766-7011
Catherine Crocket (416) 537-5832
Les Green (416) 968-6955
Scott Lucas (416) 633-5666

### July 19th Meeting

The business portion of this meeting included accepting volunteers who will be working on the following activity groups or committees: Membership, Newsletter, Outreach and Multimedia, CKLN Contact, Pride Day Instigator, Pride Day Name Change, Safer Sexuality Group, 1st Thursday Meeting Facilitators, 3rd Thursday Meeting Facilitator, and Political Action Group. (This last group, now called "Embrace", meets on the first Thursday of the month in the 519 Cafeteria at 8 pm, right after the OBN meeting.)

If you can't remember what you volunteered for, or would like to add your name to any group, or start a new one, speak up at the next meeting or call Bruce at 649-1356.

It was also agreed that the first August meeting should focus on the intentions, aims and purpose of the Ontario Bisexual Network.

### Thinking about AIDS

The discussion topic for the evening on July 19th was **AIDS**. Some of the ideas raised include:

- there is a lot of potential for AIDS transmission, for example a lot of men who are straight-identified but have sex with other men and do not consider themselves part of the gay community.
- lots of men are afraid of being "out", and may not have access to information, don't have good information about safer sexuality
- there has been bad press, for example, due to instance of a bi male, HIV+, refusing to tell his wife
- bisexuals are at risk for being infected with HIV, like anyone else
- there will be AIDS-related deaths from bisexual closeting; this is a problem that needs dealing with
- several suggestions about pamphlets we could produce, for individuals and for physicians ("how many of your patients are bi?")
- discussion about learning how to protect against all STDs, not just HIV, eg. mini-epidemic of syphillis in Toronto among gay men, easier to spread than HIV.

### *A Few Thoughts About Sex Secrets*

IF you decide to bring a sex secret into the open and tell your partner, consider these guidelines:

1) Plan what you are going to say. Sometimes it's wiser to share only the larger meaning or significance, not the details, of a private wish or fantasy.

2) Be patient. Don't expect your spouse to accept even a small disclosure without any problems.

3) If you are afraid your secret may ruin your marriage, consider discussing it with a counselor. Secrets are powerful pieces of information about ourselves and our relationships. Keep or share them wisely.

1998-028

## What's On Around Town

On October 21, 1990, the closing Sunday of "AIDS Awareness Week", a 10km. walk-a-thon called *From All Walks Of Life* will take place in Toronto. It is being organized by the AIDS Commitee of Toronto (ACT). Watch for further details in this newsletter as they become available. We encourage everyone in the OBN to either walk or sponsor someone who is walking. This is a great opportunity for us to show our support of a very worthy cause.

## August 2nd Meeting

At our meeting on August 2nd, a number of ideas were put forth for activities of OBN, and a number of decisions were made by concensus. Among the decisions were:

1) to accept Scott Lucas as our new Treasurer, and

2) to adopt the statement in the masthead at the top of the newsletter as the interim mandate of the Ontario Bisexual Network.

## Thinking About OBN

During the August 2nd discussion of the mandate for the Ontario Bisexual Network, a number of ideas were raised which may be of interest to readers, including:

- writing to Svend Robinson, MP, and asking him to contribute a paragraph or two to the newsletter

- having OBN be an umbrella network to assist in making bifriendly activities available to people in Ontario

- wanting to build a bisexual "community"

- that subgroups shall be explicit about their goals and not speak for the network, which merely exists to bring people together

- that OBN is in a sense a "toolbox" to be made use of by people, there for people to grab

-OBN should be designed so as to not consume human resources heavily

- some kind of support group is need for self-identified bisexuals

- that each newsletter should report on what happened at the meetings

### *AGAIN*

Oh God, What am I feeling
Why?

Tell me that what I see
Is not mine
To care, to love, to hold
What once was, is not ... any longer

Curse me
For I am a sentimental fool
Blind to realities
Carried away by my own emotion

I tell myself, it is over, it is done
I am happy

I turned to others
Looking for what was lost
It was not to be found
I was alone

Why do you pretend I can change
What I am not able
What makes me ... me
What makes you ... you

Stab me, cut me, make me bleed
For I would rather the pain
of hurt and rejection
than the pain
of love

*Scott M. Lucas*
*September 29, 1988*

- that there should be a subgroup for people interested in discussing androgeny

- that the political subgroup, "Embrace", should go on a watch for biphobia, including response to a biphobic cartoon recently in XTRA

- that a subgroup of people (eg. the safe sexuality group) should tackle the problem of possible risk of HIV transmission via closeted married bisexual men

- several goals of other bisexual groups were also highlighted as desirable, including:

1) work to replace society's prejudices against bisexuality with an understanding and acceptance of it

2) support the elimination of sexism in all forms

3) to give bisexuals a strong, valid identity within the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement in particular, and in society in general

The group agreed that the topic for the mid-August meeting would be "how to support each other", and Bruce Small agreed to present and facilitate this topic.

Carol Broderick hinted that there would be a party sometime in September and that she will announce more details at the first meeting in September.

## Supporting Each Other

At OBN's August 16th meeting, Bruce Small took the group through a review of the many misconceptions we have learned about needing support and providing support to other people.

Some of us grew up being told strange things, like "only the weak need support", and "people only need support when they have a problem". Some of us began to think that if we needed support it meant that we were crazy or mentally weak. Some of us who have grown up in dysfunctional or alcoholic families also tend to think that support is a one-way street, from us to them and not both ways.

Some of us were trained to think that support and psychiatry are synonymous, and that people who need support are not capable of returning any support. Most of us were also exposed to the many ways in which support can be seen as a commitment or obligation.

The whole point of the mid-August meeting was to expose and dispel these myths. Certainly mutual support between human beings (or among a group of human beings) is a natural function. We seem to be designed to thrive best when we have lots of it. It is also true that people can use support every day, not just on the days when we feel we have a specific problem. Problems get to become problems partly because we get so isolated from one another.

Some of the most active, productive, intelligent, clear-thinking, warm, sane and powerful people are that way precisely because they exchange good support with other people.

Of course it is also true that most people in most circumstances are fully capable of returning support in the other

## *EMPTY SPACE*

See? Here. Between my arms ... that is the space I would have you fill with your love. I wanted so much to hold you forever and let all else die, but if I were to do that, my soul would become lifeless and empty. Holding the tempting warmth of your skin left the rest of me void.

So I had to choose between letting myself become empty with full arms or building myself back into existence while I was still able. The decision tore at me for a long time, but I finally made it.

Now I will get back my soul and myself and be full of all those things which keep me alive, but I will always have to with the pain of my empty arms.

*Dana m. Shaw*
*March 18, 1989*

**(Supporting Each Other,** continued)

direction. Sure you may be upset about something in your life, but that doesn't mean that you are not conscious and appreciative of having someone to listen for a few minutes, and at the same time fully capable of setting aside your own issues and listening to someone else's.

And support can be a joy rather than an obligation. It is interesting that it works best when it is voluntary.

Bruce also demonstrated a few ways of offering some support to a fellow person. It is particularly important to people who are bisexual to know that they are welcome and belong in other people's lives. For some reason, many of us seem to be particularly sensitive to the possibility of not belonging.

The kind of attitude that is often helpful to a friend is to be attentive, clear-headed, totally non-judgmental, and completely and obviously delighted to be in your friend's presence no matter how he or she happens to be feeling at the time.

And perhaps one of the best services that we can offer is to be as clear as possible about what is real and what isn't. When a friend feels that the whole world is against her, her feelings may be real, but they may stem from long-forgotten hurts earlier in life, rather than the present situation. Helping someone see which part is a flashback to earlier unresolved feelings, and which part is firmly rooted in the reality of the day, can be useful.

One of our members agreed to be a guinea-pig and helped Bruce demonstrate a method of listening and offering support. What it looked like was attentive listening, holding back from giving any specific advice, allowing the person to think his own way clear, but with the loving support and presence of someone else. The occasional prodding with a new and unusual viewpoint also helps to snap a person out of old ways of thinking.

Support can include touch, but it is helpful to check in with each other to determine how much, or how little touch, would be appropriate on each occasion. Letting your personal sexual agenda or touch-starvation affect your support of others often leads to confusion.

In summarizing, Bruce noted that being attentive and delighted with each other is very important. Thinking of each other as equals and acting that way are also critical. Keeping your own thinking clear adds the final touch. Letting attention flow back and forth between you, or shared equitably among a group, helps everyone feel that they are being supported well.

Several people expressed a wish to spend more time in "supportive" mode for each other. Those who are interested may wish to organize a specific support group that meets at times other than the main OBN meetings.

# Neither Fish Nor Cow

## *A Bisexual Fairy Tale For Beginners*

### By Johnny Juma

"Ronnie's a dyke." I'd told her that I was straight but willing to try sex with a guy. Maybe. I grin self-consciously as I remembered confessing this to her; I just kinda spat it out really quickly, starting with a harsh whisper that rose to a strangled shout. That was a week ago. The first time I'd told this to a friend or anyone else. I didn't stop finding girls attractive, it was just that I'd this gnawing curiosity about same-gendered sex — kept wondering what it was like. I suppose for me it was simply a case of something new to get off on, like sports, like pot, or World Beat music for that matter.

But now I started to feel fucking tense, as I always do whenever that word pops into my mind. Bisexual. It's almost as if the word alone changed harmless fantasy into sticky, gritty reality. A perfunctory knock on the door snaps me out of my idle reverie.

My mother's ebony face pops into view. "Abal, I know it's short notice but could you get some hash for Angus and I? Our connection fell through."

"It's kinda short notice mom, but I'll see what I can do."

Mom's face breaks out into one of her award-winning smiles. You know, the kind of smile that makes everybody its own dear and personal friend. Mom hands me the money. Our hands touch as she hands me the crisp twenty-dollar bills. Black on black with a shade of green; it reeks of sin, but then we'd stopped going to church a long time ago. The more cash my parents made, the less they needed religion.

"Do what you can Abal. If you get the stuff — great! If not then we're just out of luck." Again the smile, reassuring.

"Are you going over to Sue's place?"

"Or they're coming over here. We haven't decided yet."

Another smile and then mom leaves as quietly as she enters.

Sue. A brilliant woman, blond and vivacious, Sue enjoyed life tremendously. The party animal who drank like a

fish. For some reason this reminds me of Carla, an old ex-girlfriend of mine. A girl who had tremendous appetites for life: had she had sex with a girl since we broke up? It seemed entirely logical for a girl like Carla. I laid on my back, on my old beat-up couch, staring at the ceiling as I thought of Carla.

### *I've been to gay bars before*

At precisely 7:30 pm Ronnie arrived, slightly pissed, with a forty-ouncer of vodka. My tolerance to alcohol is pretty low, it won't take much of that to get me pissed. Our connection came through, and she's picked up some hash. So I relax a little. Mom gets some hash from us and she's pleased.

Ronnie, with her thick brown fingers, rolls a tight joint, perfectly cylindrical. I roll pretty shitty for someone who's been smoking for as long as I have.

Half-an-hour later I've got a nice buzz that has me feeling just great. My eyes roam over Ronnie's slim-waisted figure settling upon the wild dreadlocks that frame her narrow face, and I keep thinking how I love her dreads. I can't seem to decide if it's worth having to endure the growing pains of changing hairstyles. Dreads. A political statement for some, a trendification with radical overtones for others.

"Do you still feel like checking out a gay bar Abal?"

My lips twitch indecisively for a brief moment. "Sure, why not Ronnie. I've been to gay bars before — a couple of times."

Ronnie laughs. It would be the first time I went to a gay bar with Ronnie. However, before I'd been a visitor, a curious onlooker. I notice that Ronnie's still holding the roach — extinguished a while ago — which she's been shaking at me, gripped tightly between thumb and forefinger. She obviously forgot it was there. It made me think of the Carribbean Arawaks of old; ancestral trinkets to ward off evil spirits.

### *Huge pricks leered at passers-by*

The club, wedged in between two drab and gray warehouses, seemed a clone of its neighbors except for a black painted door, flashing lights surrounding its name, *Jewels*, and a throbbing pulse that kinda just settled in your gut. As we squeeze our way past the huge scowling bouncers, I remind myself to go easy on the drinks. I just can't hold my fucking liquor. A near alky like Ronnie doesn't have this problem. She doesn't know what its like to drink warmish beer in a bar — unless she's served one.

Ronnie grabs my arm and immediately heads toward the bar. The place was spacious but really packed. After the first couple gulps of beer I start to unwind and survey the people around me. A tall, handsome pony-tailed Phillipino roughly shoulders past me on his way to the bar. His red-headed friend gives me an apologetic wink. I was in a good mood and they were both very attractive. I kept looking from one to the other, wondering which one I'd go for if the chance presented itself. Voyeurism gives such a feeling of false power and control: I mean, there I am feeling incredibly macho as I lust after these two guys who have their backs to me when suddenly the guy with the pony-tail turns around and gives me a very slow appraisal which causes me to shrivel up, sip my beer nervously, look away and stare at nothing.

"Abal?" Ronnie grips my shoulder reassuringly. "Are you O.K.? You should lighten up man, you're too tense goddammit."

"Bullshit I'm tense."

We both laugh, and I toss a quick look over my shoulder to catch another glimpse of the pony-tailed prospect.

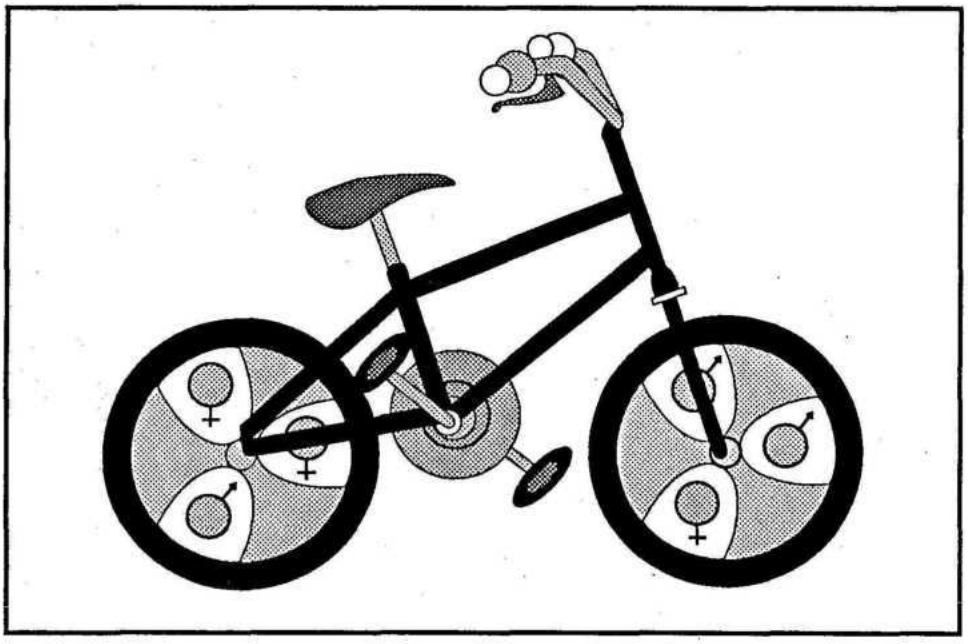
"What's it like downstairs Ronnie?"

"What?"

"I see people going downstairs. What's down there?"

"It's basically a bar and a lounge with old sofas, dim lights and washrooms. There's also a sort of D.J. who just plays his own cassettes — so no requests."

Ronnie smiled at me and spun off in a swirl of dreadlocks. Almost automatically I followed. Faceless shapes lined the wide steps leading to the basement floor. Cartoon creatures with huge pricks leered at passers-by as they pranced all over each other on the grimy walls of their two dimensional world. I thought the artist had an amazing preoccupation for huge phalluses. Stumbling down the stairs I felt everyone else's eyes upon me; the dark shadows that cussed when I stepped on their toes. I felt relieved when I got to the bottom of the stairs, except that Ronnie was nowhere to be seen and that pissed me off. It's no fun being in a bar you're unfamiliar with when the person you came with splits on you to pick up some hot chick. I took another sip of my beer and grinned. Ronnie was single and entitled to some fun. She'd come back in a while, all I had to do was wait. As I leaned against a wall I thought about Ronnie's last boyfriend. She told me there was a chance he might be here tonight. He was a self-proclaimed



bisexual whom Ronnie had dumped when she discovered she preferred women.

"Hullo," a husky voice announced itself close to my ear.

I whirled around quickly, realizing the voice was addressing me. It was the handsome guy with the pony-tail. This totally freaked me out; I barely felt the beer bottle slipping from my fingers before it smashed on the floor.

"Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. Hey, I'll buy you another beer."

That sounded fair.

"My name's Eric by the way."

"I'm Abal."

As Eric leaned close to hear my reply his lips brushed my cheek. At that moment I wanted both to run from him and to embrace him; it was a very bizarre feeling and I couldn't deal with it.

"I'm going to get your beer Abal," he said, stroking my arm and giving me a quick kiss, "don't go anywhere, I'll be right back."

Moments after Eric melted into the crowd a hand clapped firmly onto my shoulder. Ronnie.

"Lost you in the crowd Abal. Looked around and couldn't find you anywhere, sorry sweetheart."

She looked as penitent as a canary on acid. Who cared? I hoped she had a nice piece of ass lined up. I was too high and drunk to be anything but self-centered.

"Eric! How are you darling?"

I stared almost guiltily at Ronnie and Eric hugging.An unlikely event, but were they old friends, or possibly even ex-lovers? Confused, I mumbled something to them, snagged my beer from Eric and lurched towards the washrooms. Hell, I had to take a vicious leak anyway.

***It's just a phase you're going through***

There was something about the washroom that made me chill out immediately.It was like a colourful carnival: too many people who screamed, shrieked and chatted incessantly; the spectacle of drag queens who caused heads to turn; the presence of liquor and hash, and everything glazed over with a heavy layer of sex.

It took me a while to find an empty stall and, as I fumbled with my zipper, it occurred to me that Eric might be Ronnie's last fling with heterosexuality. By now, I knew I felt a definite attraction for Eric. The boy was definitely hot, it was just a matter of finding out if he was available.

I felt slightly nauseous as I stepped out of the can, neatly side-stepping the frenzied rush for the now empty stall. It was then that I bumped into someone who smelt of a dozen enticing fragrances. Not quite a drag queen but decidedly androgynous. Long flowing hair, a little make-up, and exaggerated stereotypical female mannerisms: he was for all intents and purposes a girl.

"Oh! I'm so sorry. I didn't see you there," he screemed into my ear.

I smiled involuntarily, maybe it was the way he bit off the ends of his words. But God! he was beautiful. Very pale white skin and jet black hair, tall, but shorter than myself. He looked so helpless and cute that I felt a renewed surge of manliness, a lot more than what I felt when I was around Ronnie or Eric. This struck me as being a positive change in this evening's events, so I put my arm around his shoulders and introduced myself.

"Hi, I'm Abel — I didn't quite catch your name ..."

"That's 'cos I didn't tell you." He giggled for a bit. "My name is Frank."

We both smiled at each other. I wondered what to say next, couldn't think, so I slid my hand along his back and cupped his ass. I was too far gone to be successfully subtle. He smiled when I nuzzled his ear, and all I kept thinking was things would go a lot smoother if I could get Frank outside into more intimate surroundings.

"You know Abel, there's something about you — I mean, are you gay?"

That struck me as a very strange question considering that my hands were roaming all over his body.

I replied with a huge smile. "No, I'm not gay, but I am bisexual."

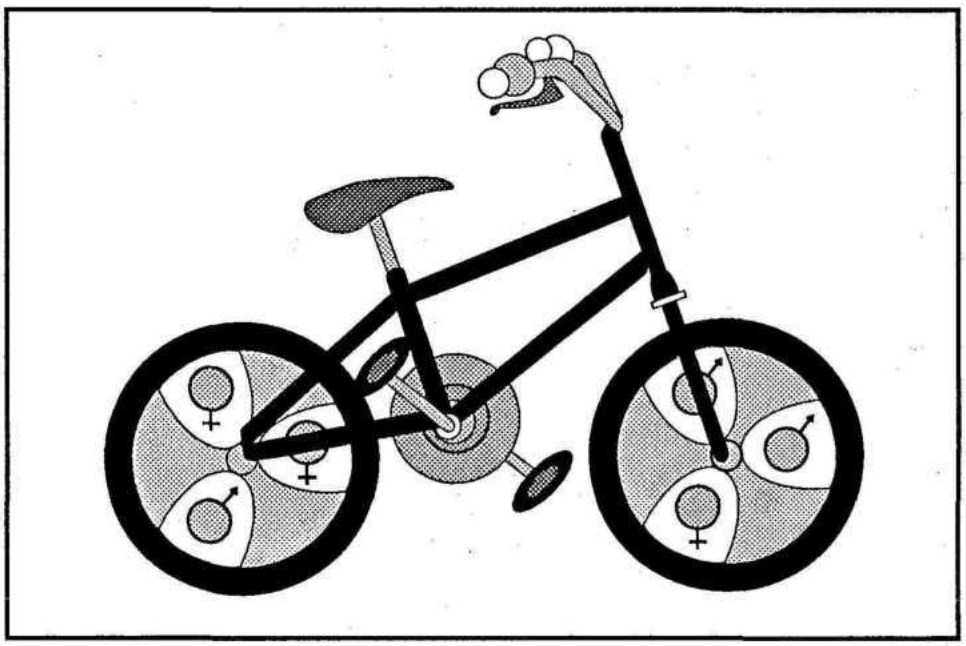
"Oh." He paused for a moment and then continued. "It doesn't really bother me but a lot of gays don't like bisexuals. I'm sure it's just a phase you're going through."

Frank had such a conspiratorial air about him that I almost burst out laughing in his face. However, what he'd said was sobering, and something I'd have to find out more about.

"Listen Abel, I gotta go or my friend will get really pissed off. It was nice talking to you. I'll probably bump into you again." He squeezed my arm, stroked my cheek, then melted into the crowd, tossing his hips like crazy.

Oh well, I thought, easy come, easy go.

On the way back to the bar, I felt a curious sensation, the feeling you get when someone is staring at you. I looked



CANADIAN LESBIAN ARCHIVES

to my left to find this absolutely gorgeous woman staring at me openly without any pretense at concealment. This was definitely an unusual night. I'm not used to getting this much attention within such a short space of time; I thought I'd better enjoy it for the span of its uncertain duration. I exchanged glances with her again peering through the flashing multi-hued lights that separated us. She had smooth cocoa brown skin and jet-black hair styled in a bristling crew-cut. Even as I sank into her alluring eyes I couldn't help but notice her solid and well muscled frame. It was difficult to turn my back, after a farewell smile, and make my way back to the bar.

Eric greeted me with an expectant hug and then led me upstairs. I realized that I might be too wasted to remember any of this the next morning.

### *Hopping from one sex to the other*

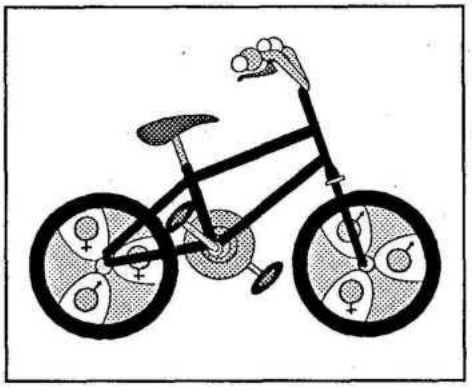
I had a stiff erection by the time Eric and I got to the top of the stairs but I kept wondering about the kind of sex we'd have. Would we fuck each other? Or just him? Maybe Eric would do all the plunging. Then again, the safest sex might be only sex or body friction. Whatever Ronnie had said about Eric, she hadn't said he was an asshole. I felt I could invest a certain amount of trust in Eric; he was Ronnie's last boyfriend — I was sure of it.There weren't too many Eric's who fit his description.

We saw Ronnie on the way out. She greeted us with a drunken leer, pinched my ass, and staggered off in the arms of two girls who were laughing hysterically at everything.

Inside Eric's car things started whirling around with disquieting regularity. I wanted to roll another joint but knew it wasn't such a good idea right now.

"You were Ronnie's boyfriend weren't you?"

During all this Eric was nuzzling my ear and delving between my legs. At this point I'm not sure if I'm gonna puke or not, so I feel slightly uncomfortable with the situation.



"Yea, Ronnie and I had something going for a while, then she dumped me when she realized the relationship was going nowhere."

"You two seem as if you handled the breakup pretty good," I said, spraying Eric with a thick mist of saliva.

"Yeah. She's a lesbian now — she's happy. And I've been having fun hopping from one sex to the other."

And Eric kept talking. I listened to him with desultory interest. Was he going to sit there all night making conversational noises? I was dangerously close to the stage where I would either pass out or throw up. Usually at this point my only alternative was to engage in some energetic activity. My hands were remarkably steady as I took Eric's pants off.

### *Officially bisexual*

I woke up cringing at the sunlight that flooded through my bedroom windows. Did I forget to pull down the fucking shades again? I covered my face with a pillow and thought about last night. I grinned when I remembered how much fun sex had been. It was weird having sex without any penetration, but when you're screwing around it can be a very sensible thing to do. Anyhow, Eric was inventive and I caught on reasonably quickly. So now, I was officially bisexual. I guess that meant I swung both ways, took the high road and the low road, liked to double my assets, and, according to what Eric said about people's opinions of bisexuality, I was a sex-crazed, morally reprehensible, spineless, drug-abusin' freak. I mean, there might be some truth to the latter but my point is, you can't rush around assuming these things.

"How's our deflowered virgin?" Ronnie said, as she opened the door, strutting into my room as if she owned it.

I groaned loudly, "Oh fuck Ron, you're not going to spend the entire morning teasing the crap outta me. Why don't you do something useful for once, like getting me a cup of coffee?"

As she left the room Ronnie called out, "By the way Abe, some chick named Carla called three times last night."

That was some interesting news; I hadn't seen Carla for quite a while. But the pages of that particular fantasy weren't written in this script — they're bound to show up somewhere.

A sudden suspicion hits me. "Ronnie, did you pull up my window shades?"

Her reply is preceded by a choked laugh. "What are you complaining about? After last night I figured it was your time to shine in the limelight."

I swear, then covered my face again. Somedays I just can't seem to get no respect. ☆

*Our thanks to "Johnny Juma" for this fine piece. We look forward to submissions of original writing from others in the Network.*

## OBN Hits the Air-Waves

Three volunteers from the Ontario Bisexual Network hit the air-waves this month on CKLN Radio in Toronto.

On Tuesday night, September 4th, we did an interview with the host of The Pink Antenna, which airs between 7 and 8 pm.

We were well-received, and look forward to many more opportunities to come out to the people of Toronto and invite others to join us in our meetings.

Many thanks to the OBN member who arranged the interview, and to those who participated. Others who are interested in discussing bisexuality in the media are invited to get together at OBN meetings and plan the next step.

*The OBN NEWS is produced monthly. Submissions are welcome, c/o OBN NEWS at the 519 Community Centre in Toronto. Your text must be received by the mid-month OBN meeting to be included in the next issue. Authors and members will be identified by name only if you give explicit permission to do so.*